

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2001

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

ROLL CALL:

Present, Commissioners: Parsons, Gibson, Mathewson, Petersen, Torre, Purcell, Wiecha
Present Staff: Community Development Director Ewing, Principal Planner de Melo, Contract Planner Schimpp, Attorney Savaree, Recording Secretary Flores

AGENDA STUDY SESSION:

PP de Melo made clarification to 1601 Courtland Staff Report under subdivision ordinance. Finding #3 referred to type and Finding #4 referred to density.

AGENDA AMENDMENTS:

CDD Ewing requested moving Public Hearing 7G to the next meeting due to a copy error that resulted in missing pages.

COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments):

Damon Campbell, property owner and representative of homeowners in Belmont, spoke to the Commission requesting that Planning Commission Agendas continued to be placed on the City's web site.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

A. Resolution Denying a FAR Exception and Single-Family Design Review Application to expand a single family residence at 3817 Naughton Avenue consistent with action taken by the Planning Commission on February 6, 2001.

B. Draft minutes of February 6, 2001

MOTION: By C Purcell, second by C Wiecha, to approve items A & B of the Consent Calendar.

Ayes: Wiecha, Torre, Purcell, Petersen, Mathewson, Gibson, Parsons

STUDY SESSION: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearing - 911 Granada Street: To consider a Preliminary Design Review to construct a new 9,179-square foot South County Fire Station. The proposed building would include a single-story apparatus bay, ground floor offices, and training, fitness and storage rooms. The second floor

includes sleeping quarters, kitchen/dining area, and restrooms. The proposal includes a 12-space parking lot within the northern portion of the site for the building. Public hearing continued from October 3, 2000. (Appl. No 11-1064); APN: 040-313-050 7 060; Zoned C-3 and R4; Applicant: Fire Chief Herb Jewell; Owners: South County Fire Authority/Belmont Fire Protection District.

PP de Melo summarized the Staff Report, recommended approval, and informed the Commission that the applicant was present.

Chair Parsons noted for the audience that this item was a Preliminary Design Review. South County Fire Chief Jewell discussed the operation issues of the new Fire Station.

Eric Glass, Glass Architects, presented an overview and then explained details of the project. From the last meeting, the main concern was the potential ability to expand the apparatus space. This led to restructuring and redesigning the building's configuration on the site. He explained that it would be a two-tone stucco building with a metal roof. Mr. Glass stated his intention to save one large Redwood Tree due to the new foundation line of the building. Discussion ensued regarding signage, trash receptacle, location of balcony and usage of generator. Chief Jewell added there would probably be eleven instead of twelve parking spaces, which still met the Public Service Building parking requirements.

C Purcell asked if the movement of the balcony was intentional. Chief Jewell said that the intention was to incorporate the balcony with the common theme of a larger station. However, with the rotation of the station, the significance of the balcony no longer exists because of where it would now open up.

C Mathewson asked if Chief Jewell had looked at putting the trash receptacle and generator elsewhere as to not lose the one parking space. Chief Jewell answered that he was open to suggestions about where to put them. C Mathewson asked how often the generator would be used. Chief Jewell said that it would be tested weekly but hoped that it will never be necessary to use. C Mathewson asked whether another material could be used for the signs instead of the common split face block. Chief Jewell answered that this topic was open for discussion. C Mathewson wondered if people from other stations would be coming in to do training in the new training room. Chief Jewell said that there was a small multi-purpose room for training and others may be coming in to have their training. C Mathewson asked if these people would arrive in a carpool fashion to ensure that there would be enough parking. Chief Jewell confirmed that the people would carpool in on fire apparatus.

C Gibson asked about the choice of metal roof. He said that it could look cheap if done wrong. Mr. Glass said that it was a high-quality metal roof chosen for the texture, color, and longevity. Chief Jewell added that several other fire stations in the area have used metal roofs in their design. He offered to take some digital photos for the Commission.

C Purcell asked about the potential for expansion because it was a tight site. Chief Jewell answered that the project as proposed would accommodate three full-time people per day. He said that the possible expansion would be to accommodate five full-time people. This would not include a physical expansion of the structure.

David Reed, Crane Transportation Group, reviewed the findings of the traffic study completed on the station. He mentioned that the station would be built to have access to both Ralston Avenue and Masonic Way and would require the narrowing of Granada Street between Ralston and Masonic. Other alternatives were considered. He added that the station would only cause about three additional inbound and three outbound trips during the commute periods. If Granada was kept as a two-way road, there would be virtually no visible change in the local traffic flow. Recommendations included a signal on Ralston Avenue to the east of the Ralston/Furlong intersection to stop eastbound traffic when an emergency vehicle would be leaving the station. The station would control this signal, along with a few others. The four trees in the Ralston Avenue area near the station would need to be maintained or trimmed on a regular basis. Three other recommendations were to widen Hiller, signalize and provide a right turn lane at the Masonic Way/ Old County Road intersection, and provide a left turn lane on southbound Old County Road intersection. Further, on-street parking would need to be prohibited along Old County Road near the intersection for the additional turn lanes.

Chair Parsons asked whether Mr. Reed anticipated an increase in traffic due to the increase in the ARCO station. Mr. Reed said that he believed that there would be a twenty-five percent increase.

C Purcell mentioned that the diversion where Granada Street would be closed would eliminate one vehicle path through the intersection. Although it would increase the traffic on Masonic, it would help with safety. Mr. Reed said that he was unqualified to respond to that issue because he did not write the report. However, he could pass on the question for the Mark Crane, the author of the report. Chief Jewell discussed safety/emergency lighting and pedestrian safety. C Purcell asked why the building had not been put on the site so that trucks would come out onto Granada, where there would be a choice of four directions to go instead of entering into heavy traffic. Chief Jewell said that citizens came up with a variety of recommendations and this was the one agreed upon. He said that the available site restricts a lot of the possible creativity.

C Gibson asked about Granada being maintained for two-way traffic. He assumed this was based solely on traffic considerations and not on the benefit received from the station. Mr. Reed confirmed his assumption. C Gibson spoke to the widening of Hiller.

Open Public Hearing

Wilma Kartman, 508 Mountain View Avenue, spoke in favor of the balcony on the station. She believed that it was more than just an aesthetic issue but served a functional purpose.

Richard Vanderslice, 904 Hiller Street, was not in favor of adding additional lanes on Hiller Street. He asked how people were supposed to get out of their driveways when the number of cars on the street would be doubled. Chief Jewell said that the traffic study was specifically dealt with how current traffic was in the area.

Mary Ridge, 323 Hiller Street, agreed with Wilma Kartman. She wanted the balcony because it would be hard on the workers if there were no windows and doors.

MOTION: By C Purcell, seconded by C Wiecha, to close the Public Hearing.

Motion passed.

C Purcell wanted to address the balcony issue. In terms of design, she mentioned the possibility of a balcony on the east side. This would allow a nice upper space. Another option was a smaller balcony on the north side, however a balcony on the west side would not be a good location. She believed that there should be a balcony for improved living standards. She said that the site was extremely limited and hard to work with. The location was excellent but the site is small.

Chair Parsons mentioned that the plans at hand did not have a balcony. CDD Ewing added that this was a Preliminary Design Review and comments such as those related to a balcony may be more appropriate at the final Design Review phase.

C Mathewson stated he liked the project, however to break up the face on the east elevation, he recommended splitting the trellis on each end or having one in the middle. C Mathewson questioned the tree selection for Granada Street, suggesting that Redwood Trees may be a better selection for the area.

C Gibson stated he felt the plan looked a lot better and was glad to see a traffic study had been done for this project. He concluded that based on the traffic study, changing Granada to one-way would not make the traffic situation any better or worse.

C Purcell recommended taking another look at the Traffic Study keeping in mind the Bicycle Path Project being considered for this area.

C Wiecha thanked the applicant for looking at the Commission's suggestions. She was concerned about the color of the roof and that it may not wear well and looked too somber. Her main concern was the overall traffic impact. She mentioned that the balcony would not be noticeable to the public. She suggested making the windows in the training and fitness room bigger. She thought that the landscaping looked nice and the trash enclosure was properly placed.

Chair Parsons was concerned about the overall traffic impact as well. He was pleased that the entrance trees to Belmont, along with the Redwood tree on the property, would remain. He suggested more Redwood trees in that area. He also suggested using a similar type material as used on the sign across the street from the project for the entrance sign instead of the split face block. Chair Parsons would like to see some refinement on the split face finish of the building. Modifications were recommended to place the balcony off the day room.

C Wiecha did not know the price difference but recommended different materials to be considered for the facade. C Purcell recommended continuity with the existing signage at Hiller and Ralston. She added that she liked the dark brown roof.

C Torre liked the improved design. Her suggestion was that if space was available that a bench be placed next to the arbor.

Chair Parsons announced the end of discussion for Design Review.

Public Hearing - 470 Ralston Avenue: To consider a Conditional Use Permit and Design Review application to remodel an existing ARCO Gasoline Service Station at 470 Ralston Avenue. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing 1,356 square foot cashier building and canopy structure and the construction of a new 1,500 square foot AM/PM convenience store and canopy structure. The proposal also includes replacement of existing underground fuel storage tanks with new tanks and piping, and installation of new landscaping for the site. Public hearing continued from November 21, 2000. (Appl. No. 00-1100); APN: 040-316-010; Zoning C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial); CEQA Status: Exempt; Applicant: Peter Tobin, Tate & Associates, Inc.; Owner: ARCO Products Company.

PP de Melo summarized the Staff Report. The major concerns from the previous meeting were landscape and traffic issues.

C Mathewson questioned that if Hiller Street were widened to four lanes, at what point on the street would it revert back to two lanes? PP de Melo stated that the widening would only speak to the component that fronts the ARCO Station. He did not know of any other plans for widening Hiller Street.

C Purcell stated she had not seen buses in the area since the grade separation and wondered if the widening would allow buses to drive through the area. PP de Melo stated Public Works would need to address this question. C Purcell recommended addressing this with SamTrans and agreed with C Gibson's suggestion for ten to eleven foot lanes instead of twelve-foot lanes. PP de Melo replied that staff would bring a final site plan to SamTrans for a final assessment for bus travel. In response to going from forty-eight feet to forty-four feet, PP de Melo noted that to create the best turning radius, increased circulation, and decreased bottlenecks in the area, the City suggested widening to forty-eight feet.

C Gibson said it appeared as though ARCO would have a net gain of square footage. PP de Melo said that the City speaks to not giving up actual land but instead allowing encroachment into the City right-of-way. There would be no fee transfer but there would be impacts on the site plan. Staff saw this solution as a potential positive solution to creating changes around the site plans such that Hiller could be increased and yet still improve traffic safety.

Applicant Peter Tobin, Tait and Associates, stated that after working with staff they were willing to make modifications to the site plan and give up eight feet on Hiller Street. He also agreed to the conditions of approval, with the exception of the potential relocation of the existing traffic signal. Mr. Tobin stated the widening of lanes would be beneficial for the area, however he wanted it clarified that the cost to potentially move the traffic pole would not be ARCO/BP's responsibility.

C Torre asked why the canopy could not be moved further over and if there would be changes in the curb cuts. Mr. Tobin reviewed the canopy conditions. He would preferred not to move the canopy.

Open Public Hearing

Resident Richard Vanderslice, 904 Hiller Street, was opposed to the ARCO Station being open twenty-four hours per day because of the added noise and traffic. He said that the Traffic Study would improve the conditions for ARCO yet worsen the situation for the nearby single-family homeowners. Mr. Vanderslice voiced concern regarding his property value decreasing due to the project and the two additional lanes on Hiller. He was upset about having to pick up ARCO's garbage from his front yard and he asked for an additional condition that would make ARCO police its own garbage. He mentioned the health impact of having ARCO about eighty feet away from his home. He also mentioned the problem of graffiti and asked how the problem will be solved if and when it arises. In summary, Mr. Vanderslice felt that not enough concern was being given to the homeowners on the 900 Block of Hiller Street. PP de Melo and applicant Peter Tobin answered questions regarding the location of underground tanks and procedures on possible contamination.

Resident Dianna Lopez, 908 Hiller Street, stated several of the same concerns as her neighbor Mr. Vanderslice. Ms Lopez was strongly opposed to the ARCO project that would be directly across the street from her house. She was concerned with the report on Air Contamination due to gasoline. She thought that ARCO being open twenty-four hours per day would lead to more people at all hours of the day and night as well as more traffic. It would not be compatible with neighboring properties. She felt that ARCO's gained square footage would bring down her property value by \$25,000-40,000. She asked the Commission to take a look at the project location.

MOTION: By C Mathewson, seconded by C Wiecha, to close the Public Hearing.

Motion Passed.

PP de Melo said that the project was subject to Section 19 of the Zoning Ordinance, which specifically speaks to allowed hours of operation. It indicated that hours shall neither commence before 6am nor after 11pm. Conformance with these standards was part of the Staff Report. Chair Parsons asked for clarification on the recommendation of the traffic setting laws. Study. The study was not based on ARCO or on the Fire Station but instead on the existing conditions. PP de Melo said that it came up with traffic signal improvements for the existing conditions. Chair Parsons asked about widening the street. PP de Melo confirmed that site plans could be made to include the widening of the street even if the widening did not occur in the near future. This would leave a buffer for the future. Chair Parsons asked what the General Plan stated should be the width of the street. PP de Melo said that staff would have to look into that issue. Chair Parsons believed that the General Plan called for the width to be as it currently was, based on his conversation with the Public Works Director. Also he mentioned that there was a graffiti law that required it to be cleaned off within seventy-two hours. There could be an additional condition that ARCO clean up the trash from adjacent neighbors' properties. CDD Ewing said that a problem could arise with ARCO workers going onto homeowners' private property, but there could be a condition to clean up the ARCO site and the surrounding public ways and sidewalks.

PP de Melo noted for the record that the hours of operation would be 6:00am to 11:00pm. Chair Parsons asked for clarification regarding the recommendation for the Traffic Study. It was his understanding Hiller at Ralston merited widening of the street to alleviate traffic congestion, and not on the ARCO or Fire station projects. PP de Melo confirmed Chair Parsons's statement and clarified that the traffic study looked at existing conditions and at steps to alleviate problems with traffic in the area. Chair Parsons stated for the record and future there was a graffiti law in Belmont that requires clean up within seventy-two hours.

Chair Parsons inquired about the previous oil spill and asked if the soil had been tested. Brian Duffy from ARCO replied that due to the planned construction, they were replacing and upgrading to meet the current California code. ARCO's deadline to finish this was July 2001. When they opened the hole to the tanks, they would do a myriad of controlled steps and tests to improve and comply with the standards of the State of California. This would not increase ARCO's business but was a cost of doing business.

C Torre excused herself and left for the evening.

C Purcell recused herself as she lived within 300 ft of the Project.

C Wiecha was glad it was not a twenty-four hour operation and that the hours of operation would remain from 6:00am-11:00pm. She stated that telephone equipment on the property needed to be addressed to

block incoming calls. Brian Duffy responded he was bound by the current contract he had with the Phone Company that services the phones, but would request that incoming calls be blocked. C Wiecha felt the revised site plan would benefit the residents and wanted to continue discussion on plant and tree selection. She preferred a greener buffer for the site. Mr. Duffy was unsure if there has been any ground water testing done on this site but since there would be construction, there would be additional testing. C Wiecha said that if the building were pushed closer to the Fire Station, it would mean that the canopies and filling stations would be closer to the residences.

MOTION: By C Mathewson, seconded by C Wiecha, to re-open the Public Hearing.

Motion Passed.

Resident Richard Vanderslice said that he had not seen a study on the amount his property value has decreased.

Commissioner and resident Gloria Purcell, 1081 Granada Street, apologized for not recognizing the 300-foot limitation and made recommendations regarding landscaping and pedestrian traffic. She wanted to see landscape that had an old-fashioned theme, such as climbing roses and wisteria instead of vines. She believed that the Granada and Ralston corner, where sign was proposed to be, did not constitute landscaping because it was merely a huge sign surrounded by a few flowers at the base. She wanted more thought to go into the signage and suggested that maybe it should be attached to the building. She was opposed to taking away a pedestrian amenity in order to deal with car traffic. There would be a large cumulative effect from decisions like this one, especially when there were so many pedestrians in the area. She was glad that it was not going to be open twenty-four hours. Her opinion on widening Hiller was that it should improve the situation.

ARCO Representative, Brian Duffy noted that the traffic pole might not have to be moved.

MOTION: By C Gibson, second by C Wiecha, to close the Public Hearing.

Motion Passed.

C Mathewson commented that he had sympathy for the neighbors across the street on Wessex and Hiller Streets and made a recommendation for a safer driveway exits. C Mathewson suggested additional landscaping both on Masonic Way and at the possible closure of the entry/exit on the west side of the property. He had trouble making the findings for the Conditional Use Permit regarding traffic. If the road were widened, he felt the situation would improve, but if it were not widened, he was unsure if he could make that finding. He felt the project needed more landscaping and non-deciduous trees.

C Petersen asked if the City could direct ARCO to meet with the residents of the 900 Block Hiller and officials from the Nesbit Elementary School to resolve some of these issues. CA Savaree stated the Commission could encourage ARCO to meet with residents, however there was nothing in the ordinance requiring them to.

C Gibson stated that Belmont needed this Gas Station for the extra capacity and competition since there were only four or five others in the City. In comparison with the gas station at Carlmont, parking was adequate. C Gibson would like to get rid of the pay phone. He did not approve shifting the project eight feet to the west because not only would the sidewalk be lost, but the apron in the driveway would be lost as well, which could possibly create a difficult exit from the driveway. The new project might draw more people off the freeway that may otherwise not take Ralston. He believed that the new project should improve the flow of traffic along Hiller. He wanted an added condition that ARCO police their own area and the nearby public areas to clean up trash. C Gibson could not comment on the property values increasing or decreasing for the homeowners near the ARCO project.

C Wiecha asked staff and CA Savaree if there had been adequate noticing that the building had been resituated on the plans. CA Savaree said that moving the building's placement did not change the project in the same manner as proposing a larger building did. C Wiecha confirmed that the City was providing an easement to the applicant and in turn having the applicant provide an easement to the City on Hiller. CDD

Ewing said that the sidewalk would be moved on Granada, not Hiller. C Wiecha asked if not having a sidewalk on Granada was being considered. CDD Ewing said that there would be no sidewalk on the east side.

Chair Parsons was not concerned about the removal of the sidewalk on the east side because he did not feel that it would be a huge traffic and pedestrian safety issue.

C Mathewson strongly encouraged ARCO to work with the neighbors to get permission to clean up trash from their front yards.

C Petersen thanked Ms Lopez and Mr. Vanderslice for taking their time to come to the meeting and voicing their concerns.

MOTION: By Chair Parsons, second by C Wiecha, to approve the Resolution for a Conditional Use Permit to Allow the Demolition of an Existing Building and Canopy and the Construction of a New AM/PM Convenience Store and Canopy at an Existing ARCO Gasoline Service Station at 470 Ralston Avenue, with the additional conditions of 6am to 11pm operating hours, pay phone removal, new landscaping, and strongly suggesting ARCO meet with the neighbors regarding the trash and maintenance contract.

CDD Ewing said that he would bring back a Resolution with the added conditions for final review and adoption at the next meeting.

Ayes: Wiecha, Gibson, Parsons
Noes: Mathewson, Petersen

Absent: Torre
Recuse: Purcell

Chair Parsons announced that the item may be appealed to the City Council within 10 days.

Chair Parsons declared a recess at 9:50 p.m. The meeting resumed at 9:56 p.m.

Public Hearing - 1601 Courtland Road/495 Shelford Avenue: To consider a Tentative Parcel Map and Single Family Design Review to create two parcels on a one-acre site and construct a new two-story 3,498 square foot single family home on one of the two lots. The proposed minor subdivision would create a 0.69-acre parcel containing an existing single family residence. The proposed new detached single family dwelling would be located on the smaller 0.31-acre parcel. (Appl. No. 99-1007); APN: 045-212-010, Zoned R1-A; CEQA Status: Mitigated Negative Declaration; Applicant: Fred Herring; Owner: Michael Briggs

CP Jerry Haag presented the Staff Report and recommended approval.

C Mathewson spoke to an older Cotton Shires Geotechnical Report, which indicated a lack of recommendation. However, the Geotechnical Report by David Jones and Associates found that with adherence to the appropriate engineering construction techniques, placement of the proposed dwelling would be feasible. The City's Geologist, Cotton Shires, then confirmed this finding. C Mathewson asked if the Commission had anything in writing that showed the confirmation.

David Shires, Geotechnical Engineer from Cotton Shires, said that his company had correspondence as recent as June 2, 2000 where they do concur with the findings of David Jones and Associates that the site would be feasible.

Chair Parsons mentioned that one of David Jones' recommendations was to build a debris wall to keep material from falling down the hill. Mr. Shires did not recall all the recommendations but thought that erosion control and stormwater protection were mentioned.

Applicant and project architect Fred Herring said that there would be a debris wall below the house. He said that the house followed the contour of the hill with a precipitous slope. The lot was particularly steep at the bottom because it had a large piece of rock. There had been a good deal of field testing to evaluate the subsurface conditions.

C Mathewson asked if Mr. Herring would be comfortable living in the house himself. Mr. Herring said that he would be more comfortable living in it than living in the existing house below it if it were not built. He said that the piers would almost function as a dam.

C Gibson asked if the slope under the house was accurate. Mr. Herring said that the slope adjacent to the house was accurate but beyond the house, there was a steeper slope.

Open Public Hearing

Resident Jennifer Thompson, 38 Vine Street, stated her opposition of the project. She felt that subdividing the parcel was unacceptable and as the petition showed, 90% of the neighbors oppose it. She said that the City has put a lot of money into this area because it has been a trouble spot during the rainy season and some of the damage from past years has never been corrected. She said that there were already enough homes on the hill. The hill has a landslide history, and she asked that the Commission deny this project for the safety of the neighborhood.

Resident Stanford Sorrenson, Courtland Road, also spoke in opposition of the project because of its history of dangerous landslides. He asked the builder if there would be any connection, such as a driveway, between the house and Courtland Road. He felt that it was hazardous and destructive.

Resident John Richy, Vine Street, asked about the retaining wall and how it would prevent the water from travelling down the hill. He wondered how the water was going to be disposed of. He mentioned that the water pipe that ran down the hill to collect water was an eyesore. He asked if there was going to be another added pipe and if so, if it would be covered.

MOTION: By C Purcell, second by C Mathewson to close the Public Hearing.

Motion passed.

Fred Herring said that no geologists declined to work on the project. He said that there was a stormdrain easement on the south side of the property. The wall would be built down-slope of the house to catch debris, not water. However, there would be actions taken to remove the water in such a way that it would not affect the neighbors.

C Wiecha asked about the energy dissipaters. Mr. Herring said that water should not be added to any location where there was very much soil as to keep the soil from getting wet and heavy.

C Wiecha asked staff about seeing Cotton Shires' letter approving the final Jones and Associates Geotechnical Review. CP Haag said that the project file was not brought over from City Hall and therefore the letter could not be circulated.

C Mathewson said he wished the Commission could have seen the letter prior to the discussion of the project. The earlier letter from Cotton Shires concerned him, and he was still not comfortable taking action without seeing the more recent letter.

C Purcell agreed with C Mathewson about wanting to see the letter. Her other concern dealt with the trees being cut down. She did not feel that it was possible to mitigate the number and quality of the trees that were proposed to be cut.

Chair Parsons said the appeared apparent consensus was that the Commission wanted to read the letter before taking action. He felt that the intent of the General Plan on steep hillsides was to limit development,

especially with a 69% grade lot with a history of sliding and rainy weather. The idea of an earthquake affecting this site scared him.

MOTION: By C Mathewson, second by C Purcell, to continue to the March 20th Planning Commission Meeting.

C Wiecha liked the design of the house but was concerned about the location, past geology, slope, and stability. She asked for more time to review the project because she was currently uncomfortable with making the findings.

Ayes: Gibson, Mathewson, Petersen, Purcell, Wiecha, Parsons
Absent: Torre

Public Hearing - 6th Avenue and Harbor Boulevard: To consider a Single-Family Design Review and Setback Variance for a new 2,493 square foot single family residence on a corner lot with two large protected live oak trees in a zoning district that permits a 2,580 square foot dwelling. To preserve the trees, the applicant proposes to reduce the front yard setback on Harbor Blvd. from 15' to 10' and reduce the garage driveway back-up distance from 18' to 16'. (Appl. No. 00-0039); APN: 045-249-210; CEQA Status: Exempt; Applicant: David Arkin; Owners: Gladwyn d'Souza and Martina de la Torre.

CP Schimpp summarized the Staff Report and recommended approval.
Applicant and architect David Arkin informed the Commission that the owners were also present.

Chair Parsons asked where the front door to the house was located on the model. Mr. Arkin said that it is located on the south side of the model facing Harbor Boulevard. Chair Parsons asked what materials the retaining walls were going to be made out of. Mr. Arkin answered that they would be made of stucco, the same material as the exterior finish. Chair Parsons wondered what the intent was for the area inside the fence, under the trees. Mr. Arkin wanted the area to be maintained as natural as possible to maintain the health of the trees, which meant that there would be little landscaping within the fence itself.

C Mathewson said that the model showed the tower was no higher than the peak of the roof, however in the drawings, it appeared to be slightly higher. Mr. Arkin said that it would be higher, although not significantly. It was still well below the height limit. C Mathewson said the top of the roof was twenty-seven feet, six inches and wanted to know if there would be a potential height Variance. CP Schimpp added that from finished grade to the peak of the tower would be no higher than twenty-seven feet, six inches.

C Purcell wanted staff to explain the function of the tower. Mr. Arkin explained natural convection to be that warm air rises and therefore, by having a tall vertical space within the building that allows air to flow up and through it, a siphon of air would allow natural air to be drawn in down low and flow up. He said that a good deal of daylight would be drawn into the center of the house that could then penetrate into the lower bedroom area.

Open Public Hearing

MOTION: By C Wiecha, second by C Purcell, to close the Public Hearing.

Motion passed.

C Petersen appreciated that the plans were environmentally attentive, and felt that the house would be a good addition to the City.

C Gibson said that he was delighted with the way the project was laid out as well as with the design. It was a nice contrast to other recent projects.

C Wiecha said that she was usually concerned about Variances on setbacks, especially side-yard setbacks because of the overcrowding and lack of privacy. However, in this particular case, those were not serious conditions. She too liked the innovative design.

C Purcell said she loved the house and design. She thought that there were good intentions surrounding the oak tree, even though the oak tree may not survive. She wondered if the driveway could possibly be made even shorter to give the oak tree the most space possible. CDD Ewing said that it was not possible to shorten the driveway. C Purcell's other suggestion was to make the house slightly smaller to get the house further away from the tree.

C Mathewson agreed with C Purcell in that the pruning required to clear the south side of the tree could harm it. He also agreed with the innovation of the project and the way the applicants went about trying to be environmentally sensitive in materials. CP Schimpp added that the applicant received a second opinion from an arborist. C Purcell said that her idea was not to clear the canopy but to improve the distance from where it was currently located. Mr. Arkin said that the trees were in excellent condition, especially the smaller one.

C Purcell said that a few weeks ago, she voted yes on a project that she hated while tonight she contemplated voting no on a project she loved because of the tree issue. However, she trusted that the applicant was going to follow the construction mitigation and because of this, she decided to step away from her firm commitment to trees and support the project.

Chair Parsons said that he loved the house besides the location of the front door. His one concern would be with the landscape plan around the fence. He wanted to make sure that it included sprinkler systems. He also wanted to make sure that the possibility of a sidewalk would not affect the tree. CP Schimpp said that there could be an additional condition for a landscape site plan. CDD Ewing said that staff would review the condition for a landscape site plan and suggested that it also be reviewed by an arborist because irrigation and oaks do not necessarily go together.

C Wiecha mentioned the condition from Parks and Recreation that stated that there be no irrigation around or under the established oak trees.

C Purcell acknowledged the extra effort of the applicant and architect with the public amenity on the sidewalk.

MOTION: By C Mathewson, second by C Purcell, to approve the Resolution for a Single-Family Design Review and Setback Variance at Sixth Avenue and Harbor Boulevard with the additional conditions regarding bonds and landscaping.

Ayes: Mathewson, Petersen, Purcell, Wiecha, Gibson, Parsons
Absent: Torre

Chair Parsons announced that the item may be appealed to the City Council within 10 days.

Public Hearing - 120 Sem Lane: To consider a Preliminary Design Review to construct a five-story, 58,375 square foot Extended Stay of America Efficiency Studios Hotel. The 108-room hotel development includes a lobby area, Laundromat, mechanical rooms and on-grade parking within the ground floor and the efficiency studios within the four above grade floors. The project includes 108 parking spaces and landscaping within the site for the proposed hotel development. Public hearing continued from January 2, 2001. (Appl. No. 00-1097); APN: 040-371-040; Zoned: M-1 (Limited Manufacturing); Applicant: Freiheit & Ho Architects; Owners: Donald & Marilyn Scranton Trust.

PP de Melo summarized the Staff Report and recommended approval.

Applicant Steve Pieters, Freiheit & Ho Architects, clarified the changes which had been made to the existing plans based on the previous concerns of the Commission. The building had been moved forty feet further back, which was as far as possible. About thirty-five percent more landscaping and trees had been added as

well. He added both a decorative brick to the outside of the building and a pitched roof. He clarified that the main entry would be off of Sem Lane.

Director of Extended Stay America, Dan Sterns, described the new building and discussed landscaping. There would be a twenty-foot landscaping strip in front of the building, an eighteen-foot landscaping strip along Sem, and a few other five-foot strips.

Chair Parsons asked about the center portion of the building having four peaks and wondered if any of it could be cut off. Mr. Sterns said that it was possible and that there were no elevators located in that area. He said he would work with staff on details but could not change the shape of the building.

C Wiecha spoke to the variation of the color of brick. Kevin Chow, Freiheit and Ho Architects, said a majority of the bricks would be brown and the others were highlight colors.

Open Public Hearing

Joe Birch, owner of Empire Lumber, said that he had hired Architect Chris Layman and done a massing concept for the site. However, he had not yet submitted a formal application. He was sensitive to the time constraint but felt that after being in the area for so long and only finding out about the Extended Stay project January 2, 2001, he asked for time to get to the same level. He wanted to develop his site and build an office building.

Architect Chris Layman had been working with Empire Lumber to develop their parcel. He mentioned their concerns as they have been developing their parcel. They were committed to constructing an office building on the site and wanted to move forward quickly. Initial studies had already been started. He wanted to express concern about being located between Extended Stay America and Motel 6. He asked that it be looked at as a cohesive set of buildings with similar design options.

MOTION: By C Mathewson, second by C Purcell, to close the Public Hearing.

Motion Passed.

A representative for Extended Stay America said that Extended Stay was willing to work with Empire Lumber but felt that Extended Stay should be able to move forward because it was only in the Preliminary Design Review stage. Also, there was no guarantee that Empire Lumber would come in with a project and it did not seem fair to make Extended Stay put their project on hold. CDD Ewing said that since this was a Preliminary Design Review, there would be no action taken. Any applicant could submit a formal application at any time and it would then be processed. Therefore, there would be no basis for the City to hold up one project for another because each property would be treated separately until the City created a district or specific plan.

C Wiecha asked staff whether Motel 6 was four stories. PP de Melo confirmed it was four stories with a very high roof. C Wiecha said she appreciated the site changes yet was still concerned about the additional height of the building above the Motel 6 project. PP de Melo said that it was unconfirmed but staff believed that the height of the building was comparable to the height of Motel 6. C Wiecha thought that there was too much brick.

C Gibson said that this was a big improvement and liked the brick because it broke up the building. He liked the sloped roof but also liked Chair Parsons' idea of cutting off the middle section to bring the height down.

C Petersen believed it to be a good use for the property. She appreciated all the changes that had been made based on the Commission's suggestions.

C Mathewson agreed that it looks nicer than it did. He would like to see something done to make the end look less "blocky," such as setting the third and fourth stories back. He was indifferent to the brick. He wanted the roof reduced, and with a lower roof, he might approve more than four stories. He mentioned concern about the compact parking spaces. PP de Melo said that compact spaces were not allowed but were still indicated on the plans, and therefore the applicant needed to take steps to modify them.

C Purcell believed that the new plans were a significant improvement, however her concerns had not been addressed. Her concerns centered on if this was the best use of the property and on coordinating this building with the overall plan for the City. She was upset about losing the recreation center and not having a place to sit down. This set of plans eliminated the small picnic area as well. Her other concern was about losing another amenity, Empire Lumber. She mentioned that the building was much lower on the south side, and if a person was standing or driving, it would seem more appropriate to have a building that was one story lower. She thought that the rooftop seemed small for the building. She worried about the shadow and shade issue between Extended Stay and Empire Lumber.

Chair Parsons thought that the Commission had reached a consensus at the last meeting about the size of the building and felt that they were now giving different direction than they had previously. He had no problem with the brick facade and thought it added more interest. He thought that taller trees, such as Redwoods, along the side street would help the project. He would like to see the front of the building lowered.

Chair Parsons announced the project would move forward.

Public Hearing - Amendment to Zoning Ordinance: To consider an amendment to the Belmont Zoning Ordinance regarding the definition of Floor Area, Gross. The amendment will consider expanding said definition to include unfinished floor surfaces. CEQA Status: Exempt (CEQA Guidelines Section 15308); Applicant: City of Belmont.

CDD Ewing summarized the Staff Report.

C Petersen discussed the intent of this amendment. CDD Ewing mentioned making a change to the fifth "whereas" of the resolution.

C Wiecha asked what slope percentage defined a hillside. CDD Ewing said that this amendment would apply to all blocks. C Wiecha's problem with the Floor Area Ratio was with all of the different ways to count FAR.

Open Public Hearing

Mayor Eleanore Hahn said this issue was brought to the Council by Council member Warden's request and was the Council agreed that the FAR was not being interpreted consistently. CDD Ewing said that beyond consistency, there was a desire to include the unfinished areas in FAR.

PP de Melo said that the issue of covered porches and decks would be discussed at the April 3, 2001 Planning Commission meeting.

MOTION: By C Wiecha, second by C Mathewson, to close the Public Hearing.

Motion passed.

MOTION: By C Wiecha, second by C Petersen, to recommend to the City Council an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance regarding the definition of Floor Area, Gross, with the hillside modification.

Ayes: Purcell, Wiecha, Gibson, Mathewson, Petersen, Parsons
Absent: Torre

Public Hearing - Amendment to Zoning Ordinance: To consider an amendment to the Belmont Zoning Ordinance regarding the Auto Sales and similar uses in the C-3 zone district. The amendment will consider requiring a conditional use permit for such uses, which are presently allowed by right. CEQA Status: Exempt (CEQA Guidelines Section 15308); Applicant: City of Belmont.

Continued to the next Planning Commission Meeting.

REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES, AND COMMENTS:

CDD Ewing said that staff would begin providing vicinity maps for each item so the Commissioners could see the 300-ft radius of each project. He also said that in the future, when voting on a motion, the mover will be called first, the seconder will be called second, and Chair will be called last in the case that a tie-breaking vote would be necessary. He informed the Commission that he had asked CA Savaree about her comfort level concerning noticing the public about what the requirement was that was being varied but not state what the specific result would be when a variance was applied for. This would provide the Commission more flexibility. He said that CA Savaree was not extremely comfortable with the idea but agreed to consider it.

CA Savaree stated that Council has asked for a memo to be created to discuss the issue of liability of the City upon approval of projects.

C Purcell discussed the possible increase in percentage of landscape of commercial areas, particularly with large buildings. CDD Ewing said that staff would need more direction on that topic before they could take action. C Purcell asked about the sliding issue and a proper course of action to keep projects that would probably slide from being approved. CDD Ewing believed that there was already an established process. C Wiecha mentioned the possibility of setting stiff penalties and fines for non-completion of grading work by a certain date.

PLANNING COMMISSION LIAISON TO CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2001.

C Gibson agreed to attend the March 13th Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 AM to a regular meeting on Tuesday March 20, 2001 at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center._

Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Planning Commission Secretary

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Audiotapes of Planning Commission Meetings are available for review

in the Community Development Department.

Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.